

Social Security and Medicare, as those children born immediately after World War II reach retirement age. That is a reality.

What do we do about it? First, we make sure Social Security can be counted on. Social Security does not add one penny to our Nation's debt. It is a separate fund. It will make every promised payment for another 25 years, with a cost-of-living adjustment, but then runs into trouble. You will see a reduction—if we don't do something in the 26th year—by over 20 percent for each benefit payment. Unacceptable. So we should think in honest terms about what we do today—small changes we can make today in Social Security—which, when played out over 25 years, like the miracle of compound interest, will buy us an even longer life in Social Security.

I think there are reasonable ways to do that. For example, when we passed Social Security reform in 1983, we said 90 percent of wages in America should be subject to Social Security taxation. Over the years, by not raising the ceiling on wages that could be taxed for Social Security, we have fallen behind in the 90-percent standard. I think we are close to 84 percent now. If we were to go back to the 90-percent standard, which I think is reasonable, and raise the eligible income in America for Social Security deductions up to 90 percent, it will move us toward solvency—more solvency—for Social Security. It is money that will not be used to reduce the deficit but will be used to invest in Social Security. I think that makes sense.

There are other changes we can do that are reasonable. We also have to look at Medicare and Medicaid and acknowledge the obvious. The cost of health care is going up too fast. We can't keep up with it, neither can State governments, local governments, businesses, unions or families. So the cost containment in health care reform is just the beginning, but we need to continue the conversation, and we need spending cuts.

Let's be very honest about it. We have taken a pretty significant cut in domestic discretionary spending just this year—even more than the Bowles-Simpson commission envisioned. There is some risk associated with spending cuts in the midst of a recession. But now we need to ask the defense or military side of discretionary spending to also make some sacrifice.

I think one obvious way is to start bringing our troops home from overseas—bring them home from Iraq. It is estimated it costs us \$1 million per year for every soldier in the field—for all the support that goes into training and sustaining and protecting our men and women in uniform, which we must do. It is an expensive commitment. As we reduce our troop commitments overseas, the amount of money being spent through the Pentagon will be reduced as well.

We need to take a close look at all the private contractors working for the

Pentagon. We had a hearing of this deficit commission and asked the expert: Can you tell us how many employees there are at the Department of Defense—civilian, military—how many private contractors are working for the Department of Defense? The expert said: I have no idea. I can't even get close to giving you an estimate, but it is a dramatically larger number. We can reduce that spending, and we should.

The point I am making is that after we have taken care of the entitlement programs and the spending issues, that isn't enough. We need to talk about revenue—revenue that can be brought into deficit reduction. Every year our Tax Code gives deductions and credits, exclusions and special treatment that account for \$1.1 trillion that would otherwise flow to the Treasury. Instead, it is money that isn't paid into taxes and into our government. We can reduce that tax expenditure and do it in a fair fashion by reforming the Tax Code in a meaningful way—as the Bowles-Simpson commission suggested, bring down tax rates as part of this conversation.

That, to me, is a reasonable approach. It parallels what was done in the Bowles-Simpson Commission, putting everything on the table and reducing our deficit over the next 10 years by at least \$4 trillion. I think we can do it, and we should do it on a bipartisan basis.

The Republican budget plan, unfortunately, takes the wrong approach. The House Republicans have proposed, among other things, a fundamental change in how we pay for health care. It turns Medicaid into a block grant program, and it eliminates the affordable health care act. One of the sources of pride we all shared was the notion that 30 million Americans currently uninsured would have insurance protection under the affordable health care act. What the Republicans do in repealing it is to add to the number of uninsured in America, thus making it clear they have no place to turn in their extreme situations but to Medicaid. So on top of eliminating the affordable health care act, adding to the number of uninsured Americans, the Republican plan then limits the amount of money to spend on Medicaid. The net result is more and more people uninsured seeking Medicaid help with no funds to pay for their medical treatment. That is not a good vision for the future of America.

We had a presentation today at our Democratic caucus lunch. The presentation was made by Senator KENT CONRAD, the chairman of our Budget Committee. He and Senator STABENOW of Michigan talked about what the Medicare changes would mean in America, and what it basically means is the average senior citizen, under the Republican budget plan, will see their Medicare benefits cut and will find their out-of-pocket expenses to maintain current Medicare protection double—over \$12,000 a year.

There are many seniors in Oregon and Illinois and across the Nation on fixed incomes. That is not a reasonable alternative—\$1,000 a month on Medicare insurance premiums? That is the Republican budget plan. It is not a reasonable way to deal with our future challenges in health care.

We will have a chance to vote this week on the Republican budget plan, and it will be interesting to see how many on the other side of the aisle want to support the approaches I have just described. Already, some of them have announced they will not. They think it goes too far. I do too.

I hope we can reject the House Republican plan on a bipartisan basis, but then let's come together in a bipartisan fashion and try to find a reasonable way to deal with this deficit. I hope we will use the Bowles-Simpson Commission as a starting point because I think it is a good one. Let's maintain some fealty toward our values, our values as a country that take care of the vulnerable whom we will always have among us, and make a pledge that our Tax Code will be progressive so working families have a fighting chance, and try to at least share the burden of sacrifice in a reasonable and just manner.

Those who are better off should pay more. Those who are less well off should pay less. I don't think that is an extreme position. I think it is a sensible, humane position.

Our debate begins this week on the budget. We have a great challenge ahead of us. I hope some of the work we did on the deficit commission will help us reach a positive conclusion.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GANG RESISTANCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask the Senate to join me in honoring the 20th anniversary of the Gang Resistance Education and Training—GREAT—Program and to commend law enforcement agencies across the nation for their dedication to educating America's youth in gang resistance.

Founded in 1991 with the support of Congress, the GREAT Program is a school-based curriculum led by law enforcement officers to instruct students

on effective ways to avoid gang involvement and prevent youth violence and delinquent behavior. This program provides elementary and middle school students with the information and skills necessary to say no to gangs, to resolve conflict without the use of violence, and to set positive goals for themselves—helping America's youth take important steps in creating a future for themselves that does not include gangs or violence.

With western roots, the first GREAT classes were taught in Phoenix, AZ, in September of 1991. Over the past 20 years, GREAT has trained more than 12,000 law enforcement officers and nearly 6 million children have been educated in gang resistance and violence prevention. The program has also built key partnerships with nationally recognized organizations, such as the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and the National Association of Police Athletic Leagues. These partnerships encourage positive relationships among the community, parents, schools, and law enforcement officers and help America's students build positive ties with law enforcement officers.

In March of 1994, my home State of Oregon received its first GREAT classes at Parkrose Middle School in Northeast Portland. Since its inception in Oregon, Portland Police Bureau officers have taught over 1,400 GREAT classes with nearly 43,000 graduating students. Portland Police Bureau officers have strengthened families to by participating in the GREAT families program, which has educated over 80 families integrating nearly 300 family members.

Additionally, I would like to recognize that the Portland Police Bureau was chosen by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms as headquarters for the GREAT Program's Western Region, which is one of five regional training sites.

I am proud to honor the GREAT Program's 20th anniversary, the thousands of lives it has touched, and share its ongoing commitment to strengthening our communities through youth-violence prevention.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

COGSWELL, NORTH DAKOTA

• Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, today I am pleased to recognize a community in North Dakota that is celebrating its 125th anniversary. From June 24 to 26, the residents of Cogswell, ND, will gather to celebrate their community's founding.

Cogswell townsite was founded at the junction of the Soo Line Railroad and the Milwaukee Road Railroad. Some believe it was named for a Soo Line Railroad official, while others say it was named for MAJ Thomas Cogswell, a Revolutionary War hero.

Located in Sargent County, the citizens of Cogswell are proud to mention

the many reasons their community is so strong. The city offers genuine smalltown living with a post office, bar and grill, repair stores, and construction companies. The people of Cogswell are known for their exceptional work ethic and caring attitude toward others, making it a great place to live and raise a family.

In honor of the city's 125th anniversary, community leaders have organized an all-school reunion, school reunion supper, street dances, a parade, 5K run/walk, games, classic car show, quilt show, talent show, and other celebratory events.

I ask that my colleagues in the U.S. Senate join me in congratulating Cogswell, ND, and its residents on their first 125 years and in wishing them well in the future. By honoring Cogswell and all other historic small towns of North Dakota, we keep the great pioneering frontier spirit alive for future generations. It is places such as Cogswell that have helped shape this country into what it is today, which is why this fine community is deserving of our recognition.

Cogswell has a proud past and a bright future.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:13 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1383. An act to temporarily preserve higher rates for tuition and fees for programs of education at non-public institutions of higher learning pursued by individuals enrolled in the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs before the enactment of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvement Act of 2010, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1407. An act to increase, effective as of December 1, 2011, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1627. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for certain requirements for the placement of monuments in Arlington, National Cemetery, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1657. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to revise the enforcement penalties for misrepresentation of a business concern as a small business concern owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans.

H.R. 1893. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, to amend title 49, United States Code, to extend the airport improvement program, and for other purposes.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The message also announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 793. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 12781 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard in Inverness, California, as the "Specialist Jake Robert Velloza Post Office".

The enrolled bill was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

At 1:53 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following act with an amendment, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

S. 990. An act to provide for an additional temporary extension of programs under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1383. An act to temporarily preserve higher rates for tuition and fees for programs of education at non-public institutions of higher learning pursued by individuals enrolled in the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs before the enactment of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R. 1407. An act to increase, effective as of December 1, 2011, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R. 1627. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for certain requirements for the placement of monuments in Arlington National Cemetery, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R. 1657. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to revise the enforcement penalties for misrepresentation of a business concern as a small business concern owned and controlled by veterans or as a small business concern owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill and joint resolutions were read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 1050. A bill to modify the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 and to require judicial review of National Security Letters and Suspicious Activity Reports to prevent unreasonable searches and for other purposes.

S.J. Res. 13. Joint resolution declaring that a state of war exists between the Government of Libya and the Government and people of the United States, and making provision to prosecute the same.

S.J. Res. 14. Joint resolution declaring that the President has exceeded his authority under the War Powers Resolution as it pertains to the ongoing military engagement in Libya.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bill was read the first time: